

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9487

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USUN NEW YORK 397

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0428

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, BC, RH, UK

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA FORCES KILL RHODESIAN SOLDIER IN FIREFIGHT

1. BOTSWANA OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT ON FEBRUARY 19 ONE RHODESIAN SOLDIER WAS SHOT AND KILLED BY BOTSWANA FORCES IN EXCHANGE OF FIRE NEAR RHODESIAN BORDER. ACCORDING TO PHIL STEENKAMP, PERMANENT SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT KHAMA, RHODESIAN SOLDIER, DETECTIVE INSPECTOR JOHN MICHAEL HARLOW, IS UK NATIONAL. STEENKAMP ALSO SAID THAT HELICOPTER WAS INVOLVED IN FOLLOW-UP BY RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES. NDLOVU SHABLANA, WHO WAS OBJECT OF ATTACK BY GROUP OF SOLDIERS, IS, AS NOTED IN SECOND PRESS RELEASE IN FRANCISTOWN HOSPITAL BEING TREATED FOR STOMACH WOUND.

2. TEXT OF PRESS RELEASE, DATED FEBRUARY 20 AND 21,
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AS FOLLOWS:

A. RHODESIAN SOLDIER SHOT IN BOTSWANA: THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT ONE RHODESIAN SOLDIER WAS SHOT DEAD AT SHOSHWE ABOUT NINE KILOMETRES WEST OF MAITENGWE IN BOTSWANA YESTERDAY. SHOSHWE IS 13 KILOMETRES FROM THE BORDER BETWEEN RHODESIA AND BOTSWANA.

AT ABOUT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY A PATROL OF THE POLICE MOBILE UNIT CONSISTING OF 3 MEN WHO WERE AT MAITENGWE WERE INFORMED THAT FIVE RHODESIAN SOLDIERS, FOUR WHITE AND ONE BLACK, HAD ATTACKED A SMALL VILLAGE AT SHOSHWE. THEY WENT THERE TO INVESTIGATE AND ON THE WAY THEY MET A GROUP OF WOMEN WHO HAD FLED FROM SHOSHWE. THEY REPORTED THAT THE VILLAGE HAD BEEN ATTACKED AND THAT THE RHODESIAN SOLDIERS HAD SAID THEY WERE LOOKING FOR A MOTSWANA NAMED NDLOVU SHABALANA. THE PATROL FOUND ONE WHITE RHODESIAN SOLDIER NEAR SHABALANA'S HOUSE. THEY SHOT AND KILLED HIM. SHABALANA IS MISSING AND IN SPITE OF AN INTENSIVE SEARCH HAS NOT BEEN FOUND.

THE BODY OF THE SOLDIER HAS BEEN TAKEN TO FRANCISTOWN AND THE MAN'S RELATIVES ARE INVITED TO COLLECT IT THERE. THERE WAS NOTHING ON THE BODY TO IDENTIFY IT BUT HE WAS WEARING CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORM AND HAD FIVE RHODESIAN DOLLARS IN HIS POCKET.

B. NDLOVU SHABALANA FOUND: THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED TODAY THAT NDLOVU SHABALANA WHO WAS MISSING AFTER THE ATTACK BY FIVE RHODESIAN SOLDIERS ON SHOSHWE VILLAGE HAS BEEN FOUND IN A FIELD NEAR HIS HOME ON SUNDAY MORNING. HE HAS BEEN ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL WITH A BULLET WOUND IN HIS STOMACH. HE HAS MADE A STATEMENT TO THE POLICE WHO ARE ALSO TAKING STATEMENTS FROM OTHER WITNESSES. AS SOON AS THIS IS DONE A DETAILED STATEMENT WILL BE ISSUED.

ON SATURDAY MORNING A RHODESIAN SPOTTER AIRCRAFT FLEW LOW
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OVER THE AREA AND WAS FOLLOWED BY A HELICOPTER FULL OF ARMED RHODESIAN SOLDIERS WHICH LANDED NEAR SHABALANA'S HOME AND TOOK OFF AGAIN AFTER A FEW MINUTES. THIS WAS THE TENTH REPORTED INCURSION INTO BOTSWANA BY RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES IN 1977.

THE MEMBER OF THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES WHO WAS KILLED AT SHOSHWE ON FRIDAY HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR JOHN MICHAEL HARLOW.

3. UK DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER TOLD ME FEBRUARY 21 THAT RHODESIAN TROOPER KILLED WAS ACTUALLY A UK CITIZEN, A MEMBER OF A SPECIAL POLICE UNIT ENGAGED IN A HOT PURSUIT OPERATION. RHODESIANS CLAIM ANOTHER WHITE TROOPER WAS WOUNDED IN SAME ACTION, AND THAT BOTH MEN WERE SHOT BY TERRORISTS". RHODESIANS SAY FIGHT TOOK PLACE 3 KM. INSIDE BOTSWANA; GOB SAYS 13 KM. HARLOW'S BODY WAS TAKEN TO FRANCISTOWN, WHERE UK HICOM ASSUME IT WAS VIEWED BY UN FARAH MISSION WHICH COINCIDENTALLY WAS IN

SAME AREA TO INVESTIGATE REFUGEE AND BORDER SITUATION.
ALTHOUGH HARLOW MAY WELL NOT HAVE BEEN A MERCENARY, UK
HIGH COMMISSION IS UNDERSTANDABLY CONCERNED AT THIS MOST
RECENT TURN OF EVENTS.
NORLAND

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